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Testifying Neutral on

HB 2594 Establishing the education funding task force and abolishing the special education and related services funding task force.

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Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on HB 2594. We are neutral on this bill because we have no opposition to starting to look at the school funding formula which will sunset in 2027. That being said, we have several concerns with this bill.

First, we think members of the legislature should be able to appoint whomever they wish and not be limited to appointing members of the legislature, and we think additional members should be included. For the special education (SPED) task force, the Senate minority leader appointed a superintendent rather than herself or another legislator, and he was able to inform the discussion in a helpful manner. While we understand that the new formula will be passed through the political process, there will be multiple legislators on the task force, and having experts in different areas would be beneficial. We also note that there are no mid-size districts represented on the panel, there are no teachers, there are no district financial officers, and there are no co-op representatives. There are probably other people who could be helpful members of the task force as well. Although they could appear before the task force, we found that the format of the recent SPED task force meeting was preferable to a typical legislative committee hearing. Rather than being called as conferees, the people who are knowledgeable about the issues were sitting at the table and able to participate in an informed discussion rather than in a limited question and answer.

We also strongly oppose abolishing the Special Education Task Force. We are still three years out from the sunset of the current school finance formula, and there is still plenty of time to let the SPED task force continue its work while this new task

force begins. There aren't even any of the members of the current SPED task force other than a representative of the State Board of Education on this new task force. Why not let the SPED experts narrow the SPED issues and then present that work to the general education task force?

Thank you for your consideration of these and other issues relating to the creation of a school finance task force.